

RESEARCH, EXTENSION AND ADVISORY COORDINATION HUB (REACH)

The vision of this Research, Extension and Advisory Coordination Hub (REACH) in West Africa (WA) is a strengthened West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development/Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles (CORAF) to meet the objectives of its strategic plan more widely with its broad range of partners throughout the region. Progressively, CORAF will better coordinate, align and integrate research, extension and advisory activities in the region for efficient use of resources and to meet the demands of different clienteles including producers, researchers, policy makers and the private sector. In an initial pilot phase of approximately 4 years, REACH will have a particular, although not exclusive, focus on USAID's activities in Feed the Future and Resilience Zones in Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Niger.

For the pilot-phase, REACH's proposed objectives are to:

- I. Improve coordination, alignment and integration of relevant activities**
- II. Create and strengthen technology parks and facilitate effective flow of information and innovations**
- III. Build human and institutional capacity**

Details of the REACH concept will be identified through a co-creation process involving USAID's West Africa Regional mission and the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, CORAF, Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Sustainable Intensification (SIIL), and other relevant partners.

A. JUSTIFICATION AND CONTEXT

In West Africa, agriculture employs about 70% of the working population and is critical for the economic development of the region. There are many challenges facing food production systems in the region, including land degradation, loss of soil fertility, diminishing biodiversity, increasing threats of pests and diseases, lack of improved seeds, as well as lack of appropriate mechanization, all highlighted against the increasing menace of climate change. In addition, West Africa has one of the highest youth populations in Africa. Therefore, it is critical to engage youth in agriculture with the intention of providing them with business opportunities and developing their entrepreneurship skills.

CORAF is an international non-profit association of the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) in twenty-three West and Central African countries, and USAID is one of its donors. The primary objective of CORAF is to improve livelihoods in West and Central Africa through sustainable increases in agricultural production and productivity, as well as to promote competitiveness and market access. CORAF has recently developed its strategic plan, a ten-year framework (2018-2027) designed to strengthen agricultural research, extension and advisory services, and stakeholder capacities, and to establish and coordinate communities of practice in agricultural research and development around the region. This strategic plan aims to (i) increase the use of appropriate technologies and innovations in the region; (ii) increase the uptake of strategic decision-making for policies, institutions and markets; (iii) enhance institutional and human capacity in agricultural research for development; and (iv) meet the demands of agricultural knowledge for target clients.

The proposed objectives and activities of REACH align well with CORAF's Priority Intervention Domains (PID) – agriculture, food, and nutritional security; policy, institution, markets and trade; and gender, youth and social equity, as well as the associated Activity Pillars – community of practice on scaling technologies and innovations for sustainable impact; Integrated regional capacity strengthening in agri-food research and innovation; and knowledge management and foresight.

REACH will initially focus on regions within Ghana, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Senegal that USAID has prioritized in its Feed the Future (FtF) and Resilience strategies. There are numerous USAID-funded research activities, with funding from USAID/Washington and USAID missions, in all five countries. However, most of these activities are happening in silos and are not well coordinated, connected, integrated or showcased while their outputs are difficult for USAID missions and other development partners to access, utilize and leverage. Therefore, there is a critical need to focus on the coordination of activities to increase the efficiency of these investments and programing, which will allow far better implementation of USAID and other donor programs (both centrally funded, and those funded by country and regional missions).

B. CRITICAL OBJECTIVES, PURPOSE AND ACTIVITIES

I. Coordination, Alignment and Integration of Relevant Activities

We will initially be focused on the USAID and BFS/ARP (Bureau of Food Security / Agricultural Research and Policy) funded research and development projects in the region. This will be done in collaboration with CORAF, USAID-Mission, NARES (National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems), universities, and FtF Innovation Labs.

Purpose: Ensure that outcomes, information, and innovations from centrally funded research projects are widely shared and that investments are highly leveraged across centrally funded activities.

Initial activities may include:

1. Mapping and tracking activities, outcomes, innovations, and information from individual projects for use by BFS/ARP, USAID missions, other USAID projects and local and regional development partners.
2. Assisting in coordinating activities, travel schedules, and Mission visits, using an online tracking system accessible to USAID and relevant partners.
3. Collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating information, success stories, and significant achievements on promising innovations in a timely manner.

II. Create and Strengthen Technology Parks and Facilitate Effective Flow of Information and Innovations

We will create new technology parks and further strengthen existing technology parks to support objectives I and II. Depending on availability of funding, technology parks, virtual in nature or physically located at a relevant facility, will function as information and training service centers and will be established or strengthened within the relevant agro-ecological zones of each country or

region. These technology parks can also be used to organize trade-show events. The place and location of the initial technology parks will be finalized in collaboration with CORAF at the September convening.

We will initially be focused on the USAID and BFS/ARP funded research and development projects and the broader scientific and development communities. Relevant partners may include national and regional official agencies and institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private-sector participants, and other donor organizations and their implementing partners.

Purpose: Provide a central (virtual or physical) location to highlight information and innovations for the wider agricultural development community to accelerate dissemination and scaling efforts and to provide training and agri-business development opportunities to a wide range of stakeholders; and amplify the impacts of USAID investments and leverage the outcomes from other development community activities.

Initial activities may include:

1. Providing a central repository for information and services provided by other BFS/ARP research projects not specifically located in the country or region (e.g., nutrition information, integrated pest management diagnostic services, mechanization schematics). Collection, synthesis, and dissemination of information, success stories, and significant achievements on promising innovations in a timely manner
2. Facilitating effective knowledge sharing between relevant research and development projects, and providing a direct conduit for research outcomes to be transmitted among research projects and the wider development community to increase the use of cutting-edge technologies, practices, and approaches in development programming, design, and implementation.
3. Demonstrating promising innovations and information to facilitate greater awareness across research and development projects, organizations, and innovation platforms.
4. Attracting and fostering private-sector participation within research and farmer networks, for example, by featuring agri-business products and contact information.
5. Serving as focal points to organize or host farmer field schools, field days, and workshops to engage all actors along the agricultural value chain from government officials and farmers to agri-businesses.

III. Building Human and Institutional Capacity of CORAF and Regional Entities to Collect, Store, Manage, and Disseminate Information on Agricultural Innovations and Activities

Increased capacity of national agricultural research and extension systems, national universities, and regional entities to ensure an effective flow of information on agricultural innovations and activities throughout the region will accelerate the delivery of research outputs to end users. Building the capacity of these institutions to also engage and collaborate with private industry and donor agencies will be critical for the sustainability of these projects and activities.

Purpose: Provide training and other support to CORAF and partner organizations to develop a sustainable agricultural innovation network that connects national and regional governmental and academic organizations, donor organizations, and private sector partners.

Capacity building activities may include:

1. Provide, facilitate, or support short-term vocational training and certificate programs; long-term degree training relevant to the creation and support of a regional agricultural innovation system.
2. Creating a data management and knowledge sharing platform, including support for improvements in data management, data curation and knowledge sharing at NARES. REACH will empower these organizations and train them to create data management platforms and enhance their capacity to curate data and share learnings with multiple stakeholders.
3. Support systems analyses for research and programming. SIIL has recently developed a framework and tools for assessing the impact of an innovation across multiple domains (productivity, economic, environment, social and human condition). This tool has the potential to quantify the impact of research, and also to help with the design and programming of research and development projects and programs.

C. ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT, AND INITIAL COMMITMENTS

The proposed organization and management structure will be finalized at a later date in collaboration with CORAF and USAID during our upcoming meeting on 9 – 10 September, 2019 in Senegal. The terms of reference for each position and entity will also be drafted and finalized.

A new position (REACH Manager) will be created and supported by CORAF (*needs confirmation*). This position will be located at CORAF headquarters in Dakar, Senegal. Management and reporting will fit the current administrative structure of CORAF, but the reporting structure will be developed collaboratively with input from CORAF, USAID, and KSU/SIIL.

There will also be a REACH point of contact (POC) at KSU/SIIL who will be responsible to ensure the flow of information between CORAF, USAID and SIIL, and follow through on the reporting, and knowledge management (*role needs to be clarified and defined*).

The current CORAF Advisory Board and Technical Committee, along with KSU/SIIL Director and USAID/DC and Missions representative(s), will provide guidance and ensure that the mission, objectives, and activities are in line with the goal and purpose of the REACH.

D. INITIAL COMMITMENTS (Minimum)

The following are the proposed initial commitments (funding support) and buy-ins from partner organizations and donors:

- CORAF – will support a full-time position of the REACH Manager (or Director) – *needs confirmation*.

- CORAF – will solicit funding for the establishment of technology parks at their Centers of Excellence in collaboration with NARES. In addition, CORAF will provide administrative assistance and communication support to the REACH.
- USAID – will provide initial funding to jump-start the REACH through funding to KSU/SIIL.
- SIIL – when renewed, SIIL will budget for the initial establishment of one technology-park at ISRA in Senegal.
- The team will collectively follow through with USAID missions across the five countries to seek country-level support for REACH activities.
- Africa-RISING – will allocate funds to support and enhance their existing technology parks (e.g. Ghana and Mali).

E. EXPECTED IMPACTS

REACH activities will contribute to improved coordination of activities funded by USAID and other key donors of CORAF as well as the Innovation Labs in the region. This will enhance the efficiency of implementation of these programs. The presence of REACH will provide wider opportunities for networking among the partners, organizations, and donors for information exchange, data management, and communication. Technology parks in various agro-hydro-ecological zones, (at relevant NARES or CORAF's Centers of Excellence), will demonstrate new and promising technologies developed by the USAID investments. These parks will serve as a one-stop shop for researchers, policy makers, development partners, and farmers seeking information on available innovations. It will also serve to attract collaborations with the private sector and other development partners in the region.

F. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING PLAN

A clear monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan along with a theory of change/logic model will be developed during the upcoming meeting in 9 – 10 September, 2019 in collaboration with CORAF and USAID. Sufficient funds will be allocated to ensure that the activities are appropriately implemented and sufficient evidence is gathered to demonstrate progress and to document outcomes and expected impacts. These achievements and lessons learned will be captured, communicated, and highlighted.

G. REPORTING, DATA MANAGEMENT, AND COMMUNICATION

The KSU/SIIL will utilize its current online management system (Piestar) for tracking and reporting project objectives, activities, indicators, and budget modifications. In addition, SIIL's current data management plan along with existing platforms will be used to comply with the needs of partners and donors. A clear data management plan and communication plan will be developed to ensure that the data are curated and results and success stories are communicated to wider audiences through appropriate methods, including traditional and novel approaches.